

Earlier today, we passed legislation—overwhelmingly, bipartisanly—finally, to raise Pell grants to increase the opportunity for young people to go to school. Pell grants had not been increased in years and years and years.

We know for students in Ohio, for example, the cost of a public education at a 4-year public school has gone up, in the last 5 years, 53 percent. The cost of a private education at a 4-year private school has gone up 28 percent. Yet the average wage in Ohio only went up 3 percent. So we have private education going up this much, public education going up this much, and wages increasing only slightly. That is why the legislation the Senate passed earlier and legislation the House is working on absolutely will matter to provide opportunity for middle-class kids.

At the same time, as I traveled the State, I heard people talk about tax policy. It is clear to people in Akron, in Youngstown, it is clear to people in Dayton and Middletown, and Hamilton and Gallipolis and Galion, OH, that too often the wealthy have paid, as their income goes up and up and up, very little in taxes, relatively, while middle-class families get more and more of a burden.

We saw, from 1946 to 1973, in the history of this country, economic opportunities for poor families and working families grew. Then, from 1973 to 2000, we saw it pretty much level out. We have seen those families who are working hard, playing by the rules, not even enjoying increases at all in their wages. In fact, they have fallen behind in too many cases.

That is why today, in addition to passing the bill providing opportunity for students to go to Ohio State or Hiram College or the University of Toledo or the University of Steubenville, students in Ohio have more opportunity—after this bill becomes law, if we can get the President to sign it—than they had yesterday.

Today is also a cause to celebrate. Today the minimum wage goes into effect. It is the first raise in 10 years. For 300,000 working Ohioans, 13 million workers nationwide, they will see their wages go up today.

For 10 years, worker productivity has gone up. In this country, more productive workers meant higher income workers. But too often we have seen a disconnect between productivity and wages. While American workers are continually more productive, their wages have not gone up. Whether that is a minimum wage worker, whether it is a worker making \$20 an hour, it is way too common.

Today, we did something about it for those minimum wage workers. Because of workers in this country—minimum wage and higher income workers—because of what they did last November, voting for change, minimum wage workers have the increase in the pay they deserve and have earned.

It is a good day for American workers. It is especially a good day for min-

imum wage workers. We have lots more work to do.

#### IRAQ CONTINGENCY PLANS

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, an issue I wish to address today relates to a request that Senator CLINTON, my colleague from New York, made to the Secretary of Defense back in May, asking that appropriate oversight committees in the Congress, particularly the Armed Services Committee on which I serve, as does the Presiding Officer, be given briefings regarding what current contingency plans might exist in the Department of Defense if we do, in fact, begin a withdrawal of our forces from Iraq.

The Secretary of Defense did not respond to the Senator from New York directly. Instead, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Eric Edelman, wrote her a letter with which she took great umbrage last weekend stating, and I quote from Mr. Edelman's letter, "that premature and public discussion of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq reinforces enemy propaganda that the United States will abandon its allies in Iraq, much as we are perceived to have done in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia."

He then said at the end of his letter:

It is a longstanding departmental policy that operational plans, including contingency plans, are not released outside of the department.

I have great concerns about this letter, having spent 5 years working in the Pentagon and knowing these sorts of letters require coordination among the highest offices inside the Pentagon. I ask that the Secretary of Defense clarify that position of the Department of Defense on the matters that his Under Secretary addressed.

Is it the policy of the Department of Defense that a discussion of the withdrawal of forces reinforces enemy propaganda and that we might be abandoning our allies, as we are perceived to have done in Lebanon and Somalia?

The first thing I ask is, what allies did we abandon in Lebanon and Somalia?—I was in Lebanon as a journalist. We went into Lebanon as part of a U.N. peacekeeping force in order to separate warring factions. We were there purely on a mission of peace. We were not there to side with one faction or another. In Somalia, it was basically gang warfare. We all know that now.

This is the kind of rhetoric that, in my opinion, was designed purely for the purpose of attacking Senator CLINTON rather than addressing the issues that we need to be looking at.

There is probably no greater testimony to that than to just go back to the bill that Senator WARNER and Senator LUGAR offered as an amendment on the Defense authorization bill, which was just pulled because this amendment—which was put together after careful thought by the former chairman of the Armed Services Committee and the former chairman of the

Foreign Relations Committee, two of the esteemed leaders of the Republican Party—asked for the same thing. In fact, it called for the same thing.

Senator WARNER and Senator LUGAR were stating in this amendment that the President should require, among other things, a report to be presented to the Congress no later than October 16, 2007, which specifically addressed the same issues that Senator CLINTON asked to be addressed in her letter, showing what the plans might be and when they might be executable in the event we decide to withdraw our forces from Iraq.

Also, I think it is a legitimate question for people in Congress to be asking when we look back at the way we ended up going into Iraq. I was not a Member of this body, but I watched, as did so many Americans, on television as this body and the House of Representatives had administration officials testifying. They asked in the runup to this war how long we were going to be in Iraq, and the answer was a litany. It was as long as is necessary and not 1 day more.

For Under Secretary Edelman to in any way indicate that it is the policy of this administration that they do not have to share the thought they are putting into these options is totally out of line.

For that reason, I joined with Senator CLINTON, Senator BAYH, and Senator BYRD in a letter to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee specifically asking that we have hearings in the Armed Services Committee that will address these issues. If the administration wants to go into closed hearings, that is fine. But I am asking today, No. 1, that the Secretary of Defense clarify for us what his beliefs are with respect to the rhetoric that came out of a letter that took 2 months to be generated from his Department in response to what Senator CLINTON asked for; and then secondly, that the other Members of this body join me in expressing their concern on this issue.

We have to have contingency plans. It is within the purview of the Congress for us to examine them. Again, I ask Senators on both sides of the aisle to put their eyes on this and join me in this expression of concern.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### NATIONAL HISTORY DAY WINNERS

● Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, today I recognize and congratulate three of Washington State's outstanding students, Leigh Douglas and Helen Lee from Redmond, Washington and Brian Maskal from Tacoma, WA, for their award-winning projects recognized by the National History Day program.

Each student's project reflects this year's National History Day theme, "Triumph and Tragedy in History." I am proud to say that these students were selected from more than 2,000 finalists by the National History Day program to present their projects.